



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Region 7 - Alaska

1011 East Tudor Road

Anchorage, Alaska 99503

(907)786-3309 (TDD Available)

News

03-08

For Immediate Release:
April 4, 2003

Contact: Doug Alcorn (907) 786-3545

Spring Subsistence Migratory Bird Hunting Policies Clarified

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-management Council (AMBCC) announced today that new regulations to open the 2003 migratory bird subsistence hunt will be published later this Spring. Until then, Service and Council representatives remind subsistence users that the Service's "Closed Season Policy" remains in effect.

Titled the "Policy Regarding Harvest of Migratory Birds in Alaska During the Closed Season," this document was published in the Federal Register on May 12, 1988, and is summarized on the web at <http://alaska.fws.gov/LawEnforcement/news.cfm>. The Policy states that, although the harvest of migratory birds in the spring and summer has been made illegal by international treaties and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Service recognizes that indigenous inhabitants of parts of Alaska are dependent on birds for food during portions of the closed period. Therefore, the Service will focus its enforcement efforts on violations that have the most serious impacts upon populations of birds that are already declining. Specifically, under the "Closed Season Policy" law enforcement efforts will concentrate on preventing the following illegal acts:

- Hunting spectacled or Steller's eiders (both of which are listed as "threatened" under the Endangered Species Act) at any time.
- Hunting emperor geese at any time.
- Hunting cackling Canada geese during the nesting, brood-rearing, and flightless period.
- Taking eggs of spectacled eiders, Steller's eiders, black brant, emperor geese, and cackling Canada geese.
- Hunting Pacific white-fronted geese in the coastal areas of western Alaska south of Norton Sound, during the nesting, brood-rearing, and flightless period.
- Wasting any migratory bird.
- Using private or charter aircraft to assist in hunting any migratory bird.
- Possessing lead shot while hunting waterfowl.

Additional guidance, including dates when harvest can occur, a list of species that can be taken, and a description of legal means and methods of take will be included in the to-be-published 2003 migratory bird subsistence hunt regulations, and will take effect following their publication.

The Service and the AMBCC will notify the public when these regulations are available.

The Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council, that includes representatives from the Alaska Native community, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service acting as equal partners, was formed in 2000 with the specific purpose of developing “recommendations related to the spring/summer subsistence harvest of migratory birds.” More information on the history and goals of the Council can be found online at <http://alaska.fws.gov/media/ambcc.html>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 540 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

-FWS -

*For more information about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service our home page at
<http://www.fws.gov>*